

REUSABLE WINDSHIELD PALLET

This application claims the benefit of co-pending provisional application Ser. No.

5 60/442,719, filed on January 27, 2003.

Background of the Invention

This invention relates generally to collapsible pallet racks and more particularly to a collapsible and stackable pallet for shipping and storing breakable material.

10 Partially collapsible or foldable steel pallets are known for use in place of wood pallets in shipping heavy and awkward articles such as automobile windshields. Steel pallets are very durable, allowing for prolonged use. Moreover, partially collapsible pallets allow for reduced shipping volume, decreasing the cost of relocating empty pallets for reuse. Accordingly, it is known generally to use partially collapsible steel pallets to ship breakable goods, such as
15 automobile windshields.

The shipment of breakable goods present unique challenges in the design of reusable pallets. For example, if a pane of glass is not properly secured within the pallet, unacceptable levels of breakage occur in shipment. Accordingly, it is known to use dunnage when shipping windshields. "Dunnage" is simply packing material which is added to the pallet so as to make
20 the shipped material more secure. Of course, the addition of dunnage to the pallet takes time, and increases the potential for breakage when improperly performed. Moreover, the need for dunnage increases the cost of shipping. All of these problems are exacerbated when a partial pallet (a pallet that is not completely filled) is to be shipped.

It is also known to design a pallet so as to provide support at a plurality of locations when
25 shipping a pane of glass. U.S. Patent No. 5,154,310 to Massey is an example of this type of